

QUESTION
1

It is a given that you have a passionate interest in the sport of eventing. What are the main objectives that have encouraged you to stand for election?

As an elected Board Director, I am confident that my comprehensive knowledge of the Sport would be of tremendous value to the Board of British Eventing. I am enthusiastic, dynamic and energetic. Most importantly, I am *current*, and I want to make a difference.

British Eventing is a membership organisation and would not exist without each of the stakeholder groups. It is British Eventing's role to deliver the Sport to the highest possible standard. In order to fulfil this role, it is essential that the organisation works collaboratively with each Stakeholder group for the good of the Sport.

I strongly believe that these relationships need strengthening, and that if the Sport we all feel so passionately about is to have a relevant and sustainable place in the future then it is essential for us to all work together. I am confident that I can encourage this process and be instrumental in achieving greater cohesion, ensuring that the Sport is the main priority.

COVID-19 aside, there are questions that need answering. Questions such as Where is the Sport going? What will it look like in 5yrs? 10yrs? We now more than ever need to be shaping the future of the Sport.

We would all like BE to be in a healthier position financially. I firmly believe that the key to its survival is through *evolution* not revolution. Yes, things do need to change; the Sport needs strategic direction and a vision for the future, but I do not believe it will withstand insurgence.

QUESTION
2

The BE Board comprises individuals with a range of skills derived from their professional lives. How do your own skills and expertise fit with the current Board members' expertise in relation to running the sport and the business of eventing?

My professional life has been built around the Sport. I have transitioned from "professional event rider" to Organiser and Official through the role I took as Manager at Bicton Arena 7 years ago. This role encompasses far more than being an Equestrian Event Organiser. I am also part of the Senior Management Team of Clinton Devon Estates (CDE). CDE is a land management and property development company which manages the Estate of Baron Clinton, the largest landowner in Devon. Its portfolios include 26,000 acres of land, several hundred houses, four farming enterprises, three business parks and two solar parks.

Bicton Arena sits within this portfolio and the employment brief I was given was to put it on a sounder commercial footing and identify areas for growth, while also looking to the future. I report to the family quarterly and to the Trustees annually. Within my role, I regularly chair meetings monitoring performance and ensuring that policies and targets are met. I manage a budget of in excess of £1.5 million and have formulated and implemented a business plan which has witnessed growth of 56%.

Working for the Estate has given me a unique insight into how a company with over 700 years of history has had to continually adapt and adjust in order to remain successful and relevant. The continual evolution of their strategy has been critical to keeping them focussed on the future and to

ensure that they meet the wider demands of Society and are prepared for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

It is these such skills that I feel are key to running the Sport and business of Eventing.

Please note my role as Manager at Bicton involves *no personal gain* from organising Bicton Horse Trials (or indeed any of the events I run). I get paid the same wage regardless of whether I run one BE event, two or three. Indeed, I would still get paid my wage if I did not run BE events at all. Having experienced the Sport from multiple perspectives and across all levels, from Grassroots to 5*, I am confident that I can bring a selfless and objective knowledge to the Board.



Given the pressures the sport faces, with falling membership, competition from other equestrian activities and the prospect of a generally poor economic climate, marketing is likely to be important to BE in 2021. Where do you think BE's marketing efforts should be focused in order to address these challenges?

The Four P's of Marketing:

1. **Product** – The Sport

We have a great product and BE need to focus on what they are good at – delivering the Sport we all love. For me, this means driving up event standards; key to this is cross country course design, ensuring educational tracks at all levels and decent going/footing at all BE events. Officials training/education goes hand in hand with this as BE Officials are the ones who are there to ensure event standards are met. There has been little to no CPD for BE Officials over the last few years. I would encourage BE to look at implementing an education system similar to the FEI Seminars.

2. **Price** – Entry Fees/Registrations/Event Fees

BE need to find a way of preventing the Sport getting more and more expensive, and stop it spiralling out of control for ALL stakeholders. As part of my work on the British Eventing Advisory Group (BEAG) we looked in depth at this and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas further with a view to taking some of the proposals forward.

BE have already announced ambitious discounts for members who renewed prior to 31.05.2020 to utilise in 2021, particularly off Horse Registration (50%). This is something that needs promoting further (it is significantly more generous than both BD & BS) and BE should make sure the membership realise this.

3. **Place** – Venues

We are fortunate to compete at some of the most stunning locations across the UK, as well as venues with the most up-to-date facilities. The variety and geographical spread of venues is key to maximising members' opportunities. BE need to work more collaboratively with the Organisers and be mindful that the financial liability of each individual event lies with the Organiser.

I would encourage BE to revisit Fixtures and Fixtures Processes with a matter of some urgency. COVID-19 is set to be here for the foreseeable future and BE Calendar needs to be more dynamic and proactive to cope with this. There is currently little to no incentive for Organisers to reinvest back into their events. The review of the SFC 2020 – 2025 process raised numerous issues which are yet to be addressed, in particular the flaw relating to uncontested fixture opportunities and the perceived need to have an event that week, as well as geographical balance which did not feature

sufficiently in the overall allocation of events. It would be fair to say such issues apply to the National calendar also.

Great inroads have been made for Grassroots levels with the implementation of Area Festivals for 2021. The loss of the BE80 Championships at Burghley is a huge blow, but BE must prioritise finding a replacement venue with the kudos and magnitude that the membership will seek.

4. **Promotion** – Definition: “The publicising of a product, organisation, or venture so as to increase sales or public awareness”

There are so many unique characteristics about the Sport that BE need to present:

- Equestrianism is the only Olympic Sport whereby men and women compete on completely equal terms
- The remarkable relationship between horse and rider (look at the highly successful FEI #TwoHearts campaign pre-Rio 2016)
- One of very few Sports where professionals & amateurs compete on a level playing field

BE need to look at the way content is being developed and distributed and increase its focus on digital and social media, developing new types of content. Through social media marketing (SMM), I would encourage them to look at new ways to provide greater value to their followers. Create something their audience will find useful.

Example: I feel strongly that there is nothing in the public domain whereby competitors can discover what to expect on cross-country tracks. I picked a BE80 competitor up off the floor a few years ago only for her to exclaim “I didn’t know you could have a ditch at BE80 level”. As a BE Course Designer, I have access to the BE Cross Country Guidelines which stipulate this, but how was she to know? Competitors can look at dressage tests in the rule book and also read the specific showjumping requirements i.e. no water tray permitted below Novice level, however, there is nothing detailing what to expect on the cross-country phase. This arguably the most important phase (certainly the most dangerous from a risk-management perspective) so surely, we should be enabling members (both existing and even more importantly new members) to discover what they should expect?



Please provide specific examples of initiatives that are likely to enable existing members to gain full benefit from their membership and suggest means to encourage new members and horse registrations.

A few ideas/initiatives that I would like to investigate further:

- Improve relations with other BEF member bodies and look to offer discounted BD & BS membership to BE members
- Current BE members who introduce a friend to BE to receive a credit towards their own membership
- Take the limit of Day Tickets (currently 4) and make the Day/Training Ticket results unrecorded
- Scale of membership fees dependant on level you compete at
- Membership benefits – review current membership benefits and look at new initiatives i.e. subscription to Horse & Country TV included to enable members to benefit from live streaming of events
- Entries – enable riders to book slots at appropriate levels and declare horse name on say the Monday of the week of the event (I believe this would aid the pro-riders greatly)



BE Director Election

Do you have any specific questions you would like to ask Helen?

Please email any questions you may have to helen@helenwesteventing.com

